

FOCUS - 9 of 34 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2002 The Washington Post

The Washington Post

April 16, 2002 Tuesday
Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A04

LENGTH: 470 words

HEADLINE: WASHINGTON IN BRIEF

BODY:

Two senators plan to introduce a bill this afternoon that would allow victims of terrorism to seize assets of foreign countries that have sponsored the violence against them.

Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and George Allen (R-Va.) will introduce the Terrorism Victim's Access to Compensation Act as the legal mechanism that would direct the U.S. Treasury to release frozen or blocked assets to pay court judgments against countries the State Department has designated as sponsors of terrorism.

Dozens of terrorism suits have been filed in federal courts in the past two years, but even plaintiffs who have won in court have found it extremely difficult to collect their awards. The executive branch has said such claims might open the United States to retaliatory suits in foreign courts.

The Senate has unanimously approved the nomination of Terrence O'Brien to fill a seat on the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The Senate voted 98-0 yesterday to confirm the nomination.

O'Brien was nominated by President Bush in August for a seat on the court that oversees appeals in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah and Wyoming.

"I can give you my personal assurance that our country will benefit from his many talents," said Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.). Added Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.): "Certainly no one is better qualified."

O'Brien is a graduate of the University of Wyoming College of Law and was a district judge in Wyoming for 20 years.

With O'Brien's confirmation, the Senate has approved 43 of Bush's 98 nominations for federal trial and appellate courts. The Democratic-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee rejected one nominee, U.S. District Judge Charles Pickering of Mississippi, for an appeals court seat.

Amtrak's unsuccessful attempt to raise much-needed money through expansion raises questions about how the railroad makes decisions on routes and services, according to a new government report.

Amtrak announced plans in February 2000 to expand service on 15 routes but has done so on only two, the General Accounting Office reported yesterday. Nine others were never implemented, three have been delayed and one failed, said GAO, the investigative arm of Congress.

Amtrak overestimated revenue from new mail and express service and misjudged its ability to reach agreement with freight railroads over payments for track upgrades, GAO said. It recommended that Amtrak's president disclose to the railroad's governing board "any significant risks" of future route or service changes.

The Washington Post April 16, 2002 Tuesday

Amtrak spokesman Bill Schulz said that although the growth plan fell short of its initial goals, "aggressively pursuing business opportunities at every juncture continues to be a key strategy to improve Amtrak's financial performance."

-- Compiled from reports by staff writer Neely Tucker and the Associated Press

LOAD-DATE: April 16, 2002